

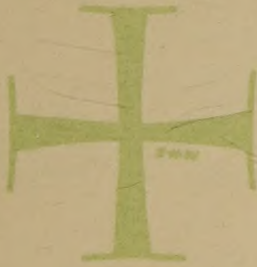
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EDITORIAL

What the Church of God purports to do and what it actually achieves in our society are frequently two different things. We are not here referring to the perennial weakness and sinfulness of human nature. We are referring to a kind of sociological problem especially notable in our time. The Church is designed to be the meeting place of God and man. It is intended to be a centre of reconciliation, a place where human life is healed of its inner sinfulness and conflict, and given new meaning and power through the Grace of God. The difficulty in the contemporary world is that few people are conscious of any need for reconciliation with God. Few people are aware that the meaning of life is a problem. Most men and women to day accept the goals and concerns of contemporary culture with little hesitation and few objections. Life, they feel, is a matter of achieving economic security, of avoiding pain and discomfort as much as possible, and of achieving the maximum amount of pleasure within the limitations set by polite society. Religion comes into the picture at this point because it provides a kind of emotional over-tone for conventional morality, and gives it a setting in long established tradition. In other words, the function of the Church in our society - as contrasted with its own real purpose - is to be a mere agency of moral and social stability, serving the accepted goals and standards of our society.

Every parish priest is aware of this problem. He is acutely aware of it whenever he encounters a person who is seriously dissatisfied with the accepted formula of life, and is interested in finding out what the Christian religion is really all about. Should such a person finally embrace the Christian religion in an all-out fashion, the parish priest may well be at a loss to fit him into the existing parish program. Such a person wants an opportunity to think and study and pray and act, and most of all, he wants to do all these

things with a group of people who have the same concern. Such a group is not too often found in an average Anglican parish. When the Church - in the sense of its total membership - has become so widely distracted from its essential mission, how does it cope with those who have suddenly discovered that the Christian religion involves a different and exciting, though sometimes very difficult way of life? In other words, how is the Christian faith worked out in practice for the devout layman to day?

We will not even attempt an answer now, but the next issue of Canada and Christendom will be devoted to this problem. It will report the views of a number of Christian laymen who will gather together at the second Canada and Christendom conference in Toronto this fall. There are times when we feel that the Anglican Church is excessively priest-ridden. This time we will give the laymen a chance to speak.

TO BAPTIZE OR NOT TO BAPTIZE....

For a long time I have been concerned about our present administration of Holy Baptism. I have come to the conclusion that a great many of us, in our participation in this sacrament as parents, godparents, or even as clergy, are guilty of what amounts to perjury or sacrilege, or both.

This is not done deliberately. Some parents who ask for Baptism know what they ask for. There are godparents who are clear about their duties and responsibilities. These keep their vows faithfully by their Christian living, and by overseeing as far as possible, that their children and godchildren are brought up in the Christian Faith. And there are clergy who make sure that parents and godparents know what they ask for, and will be faithful to their obligations. But there are also countless cases where people ask for Baptism for their children, and they do not know what they ask for, its value, or significance. And there are great numbers of godparents who do not understand the promises they are making, the responsibilities they are accepting, and have no intention of fulfilling either. And there are numbers of clergy who through assuming too much, have permitted this condition to be perpetuated. In this I have been as guilty as any..

I first became concerned about this condition when, as a chaplain overseas, I prepared men for Baptism and Confirmation, and later, when as O. C. of the Army Chaplains' School for Christian Citizenship, I interviewed the men who attended the school. I found that most men knew very little about the Christian Faith, even those whom one would classify as regular church members. Out of curiosity, I asked many hundreds whom I knew to be baptized, who their godparents were. Only a handful knew. This meant that nearly a thousand people had sworn before God and Christian congregations, to do all in their power to see that

the child for whom they were sponsors be brought up in the Christian Faith; and the manner in which they had done so was such that when their godchild grew to maturity, he did not even know who his godparents were.

Returning from overseas to civilian and parish life, I found that numbers of people regarded the sacrament of Holy Baptism as a social affair, a venerable custom, a spiritual serum, or even as a form of social security in which the godparent becomes a guarantee of the physical welfare of the child if the parents become ill or die.

Those who act as sponsors in Holy Baptism are making one of life's most solemn promises. It is a promise for which they could not be held responsible legally, but some day I am sure that God will ask an accounting. For they promise, by the help of the Grace of God, through their own personal devotion and loyalty to Christ and the Church, to be an example to the child for whom they are sponsors. And they promise to see that the child is instructed in the faith, is taught to pray, and is brought regularly to public worship. Some people do just this. Many do not, and have no intention of so doing.

Shortly after my return to the parish, two mothers asked to have their babies baptized... On being told that I was ill and that no baptisms would be held until a later date, they came to the rectory and insisted that their babies be baptized the following Sunday. When I asked why, I was told that the guests had been invited and the cakes ordered. (Yet no arrangements had been made with me for the baptism). I had to state that the sacrament of Holy Baptism was not an addition to anyone's social function. Later I baptized the babies, but not before making clear to parents and godparents, the great responsibilities they were undertaking.

This incident was revealing. I wondered how many more regarded baptism so lightly. Therefore, when next I was asked to baptize the baby of a young couple, I asked to meet with the parents and prospective godparents.

We met and discussed the service and the obligations they would assume. Taking nothing for granted, I asked the young lady who was to be god-mother if she understood the responsibilities she was undertaking. She said that she did. I found that there was much that she did not know, and that she had not read through the service. I asked if she would sign her name to a piece of paper without first reading it. She quickly said that she would not. Then I asked how dare she take three solemn oaths before God and a Christian congregation when she did not know what these oaths were. She saw the reasonableness of my query. I believe it was an evening well spent. But I wondered how many godparents were like this young lady.

A further incident revealed that laxness exists elsewhere. A young man brought a friend to church who wanted his baby baptized on Easter day. But in that week baptisms were held on Easter Saturday. He was disappointed. He too had made arrangements with his friends, though not with the Church. Knowing that he was a stranger, I asked him of what church he was a member. He had never been a member of any church. This was also true of his wife. At this point I asked him why he wanted his child baptized in a faith that neither he nor his wife professed. He replied only that his other child was baptized. Then I inquired about the godparents. They were apparently members of no church. I asked if he thought it possible for one who was not a member of the Masonic order, Kiwanis, Rotary etc., to sponsor one who wanted to join one of these societies. He did not think so. So I asked what made him think that the Church of God was less

important than any human association. I told him that I would be happy to baptize his baby, but that the parents and godparents should first receive instruction. At this he became indignant and said that when his older child was baptized, no questions had been asked. I did not see him again.

Frequently, it seems, we have behaved as though our Lord had said: "Go and baptize anyone who asks for it. It does not matter whether they have heard or read the Gospel; it does not matter whether they care anything about Me or have any intention of following Me." And so people who are indifferent to the Church, bring their children to be baptized, and they are baptized with few questions asked. On the highest level, this approaches sacrilege and is dishonest. On a lower level, it just does not make sense.

What then can be done in the direction of reform? A beginning can be made by explaining and establishing one or two basic rules governing baptismal practice in the parish. No one should be a sponsor who is not an active member of the Church. Parents and sponsors should receive some form of pre-baptismal instruction so that they will clearly recognize and seriously regard their responsibilities. Finally, baptism should, wherever possible, be a major public service in the parish. This presents difficulties in some parishes, but with good planning the difficulties can generally be overcome. For instance, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, the mothers and babies remained in a special room until the baptism proper (at morning service) was about to begin. This enabled the mothers to cope with feeding problems and various other last minute emergencies.

We cannot afford to let this matter slide. Salvation is not free. It cost the death of Christ

on the cross, and more suffering than we shall ever know, to make it available for us. And we cannot receive it in full unless we give ourselves in return. To imagine otherwise is to be deluded tragically. Let us remember that the Holy Ghost did not come in fullness to everyone at Pentecost... but only to those whom our Lord had prepared and thought ready to receive Him.

J. C. Clough

(This article is reprinted from a parish bulletin issued at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Toronto. It has been slightly revised by the editor with the permission of the Reverend J. C. Clough.)

"NAME THIS CHILD"

When we hear the word "christening", I suppose that we are almost as likely to think of a boat as of a baby. As everyone who keeps up with the news-reels knows, the "christening" of a ship and the "christening" of a child have two conspicuous features in common, the pouring of a liquid and the giving of a name, so that it is hardly surprising that the same word should be used for both ceremonies. Unfortunately, however, the significant differences tend to be overlooked. Thanks to a kind of Gresham's law of the intellect, the debased idea of "christening" as a simple naming tends to crowd out the deeper meaning which belongs to the term as applied to Baptism, and what began as a picturesque way of launching a ship, with appropriate respect for its individuality as a product of human skill and craftsmanship, has encouraged us to think of the act of making a Christian as the mere giving of a label.

A little reflection, however, should make it plain to us that "christening", in its basic sense, has much deeper meaning than that. To "christen" a child means to "Christian" him, and not just to make it possible to refer to him as "Johnny" rather than "it", or to identify him as a distinct member of human society. When Christian usage first associated the giving of a name with the Sacrament of Baptism, much more than the attaching of a convenient label was implied. The "Christian" name, the name given in Baptism, was intended to have a much richer meaning than an ordinary "given" name, by which Bill Smith might readily be distinguished from John Smith on a voters' list. The brief dialogue in which the Christian name is given in the rite of Baptism makes that clear enough. "Name this child." "John Michael." "John Michael, I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." In that last solemn and decisive sentence the true meaning of the Christian name is unveiled.

For Baptism means nothing less than the making, the birth, the new creation, of a Christian person, with his own new name to symbolize and express his Christian reality. It means the rebirth of the child of earth as the child of the eternal Father, as one "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (St. John 1:13). It means, too, the bringing of that new creature, with his new name, into fellowship with the true God, the eternal Trinity, whose Name is Father-Son-and Holy-spirit. It means, finally, the entrance of the new-born child of God into the Church, which is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ, the family of God.

Even if we begin, then, by thinking of "christening" as naming, the very mystery of the new

name leads us on. What does it really mean, we ask, to be given a new name, a new sign and token of personal existence, under the invocation of the august Name of the eternal, living and true God? As we begin to answer that question, the very newness of the Christian name will help us to see our christening as our new creation in Christ. "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation. . . .As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (2 Cor.5:17; Gal. 3:27). It is for this new reality, so boldly proclaimed by St. Paul, that the new name stands -- for the new person in Christ, the new creature who begins to live and grow as God's child through the new birth by water and the Spirit.

But this new birth in Baptism, this "regeneration", must not be thought of simply as a change within the isolated person. The person, whatever his natural or supernatural endowments may be, means very little by himself. The very fact of being a person implies responsibility--the power to respond, the duty to respond. And to be a Christian person, new-born in Baptism, is to be bound to grow in response to God, to the true God who in Christ has drawn near to his people in personal fellowship. That means that the religious response-- not just vague religion, but the true religion, the worship of the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit-- is essential to the life of the Christian person, as he grows from spiritual infancy to maturity. It is for that reason that the baptized Christian is expected to take his part in the Church's worship, and to open his ears to the word of faith which tells him how to "worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity."

But this is not the whole responsibility of the new man in Christ. The new life of the Christian person is bound up with other Christian lives, and

with the lives of those who may be brought by God's love to faith and Baptism. In other words, the growing Christian has a responsibility both to the Church and to the world. He worships as a member of the Church, in a solemn act often described as a "public work" (the Liturgy) or a "fellowship" (the Holy Communion). He confesses his sins and is forgiven as a member of the Church. He is bound up in the life of prayer with all other Christians, both living and departed. Furthermore, because the Christ, through whom he worships and prays and is forgiven, loves the world, the Christian is committed to responsibility for that world. A social response, then --not just vague sentiment, but a walking in Christ's steps, in love of the brethren and concern for the world, in justice and humility-- is an essential element in the life of the newly named child of God, as he grows to maturity in Christ. Common prayer and common action are not just optional extras; on the contrary, they are the very stuff, the flesh and blood, of the Christian life.

All this is stated in the rite of Holy Baptism-- and yet we have to confess that we fail only too often to grasp the many-sided truth of that Sacrament. Time and again, "christening" is thought of as an isolated act, and the responsibilities both of those who administer it and those who receive it are forgotten. But Baptism is not meaningful as an isolated act. It points implicitly to the whole process of Christian life and growth, and we owe it to every baptized person to make that wider reference explicit.

It is this that makes the indiscriminate and perfunctory Baptism of children difficult to defend, and we need not allow the extravagances of the self-styled "baptismal reformers" to hide the real problem. I know that when we hear, for example, of a priest and

scholar who has broken with Catholic tradition and refused to have his young son baptized until he is ready, in terms of Anglican custom, for Confirmation, simply because of some hastily constructed theory of Christian initiation in the primitive Church, it is tempting to dismiss the whole issue. We must remember, however, that the traditional practice of infant Baptism belongs in the setting of an effective system of sponsorship and Christian education, because the sacramental and the social cannot be put asunder, and that it is gross irresponsibility to commit human beings to the baptized life without making some reasonable provision for their nurture in the faith. In practice, this will mean, among other things, that we can no longer be content with a routine administration of Baptism, in which the ceremony itself is the only point of contact between the priest and the parents and sponsors. Some instruction of sponsors and parents, some care in the choice of sponsors, and some evidence of their acceptance of their task (beyond the hesitant murmuring of the responses in Church), would seem to be minimum conditions of the due administration of Baptism in our half-pagan society.

When the Liturgy is given a chance, it is its own best interpreter, so that the instruction of parents and sponsors, as well as of the Christian community as a whole, should begin with the reform of our actual celebration of the rite. Instructed churchpeople should give their priests every encouragement when the latter try to do away with "hole-and-corner" Baptisms, and take active steps to make Baptism as much of a corporate and solemn act as the Eucharist. It would be utopian to suggest that every child should be baptized during the principal Sunday service, but certainly Baptism should be administered before the whole congregation at frequent intervals, with as much ceremonial dignity as

the customs of the parish indicate. The liturgical solemnity will be both an expression of thankfulness to God for his sacramental gifts and a lesson in the supernatural meaning of Baptism, while the presence of the congregation of the faithful will be a reminder that the new name, like our family name, belongs to us as members of a family group-- in this case, nothing less than the household of God, our Creator and Redeemer.

E. R. F.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN REVIVAL

We have been hearing a good deal lately about a Christian revival in literature. Clearly, poets like T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas, novelists like Mauriac, Bernalos and Graham Greene-- to mention only the better known names--constitute a unique constellation, a constellation which took shape slowly and is only now being observed for what it is. These writers are Christian writers, in the exact sense. They are not merely Christians who happen to write. Their art is consciously dedicated to the realization of a specifically Christian vision of reality.

This is not to say, of course, that a writer steeped in Freud or Einstein or Sir James Frazer is therefore not a Christian writer. Christian art at its highest has never been, in the exclusive sense, pure. It is quite possible that a Christian to-day might find almost as much use for Freud and Einstein as St. Thomas Aquinas once found for the pagan Aristotle. W. H. Auden is a fine example of the capacity of the Christian artist in our time to digest and to

employ the findings of the new psychology. T. S. Eliot's Christian universe is compounded, among other things, of the new anthropology and the new physics. I would even say that it is precisely this capacity to meet, to grasp and to put in order the magnificent chaos of secular thought which characterizes a genuinely Christian art in our time---or in any other time.

However, it is necessary to distinguish the specifically Christian ordering of experience in art from that literature of mythic religiosity now so prevalent. For there are literary critics among us who will pin the label "religious"---and even "Christian" ---on any work of art which is not incarcerated within the sheer four walls of a materialistic determinism. Nowadays if any man so much as guess out loud that mysteries may lie beyond the range of telescope and microscope, he is acclaimed at once as a seer, mystic, prophet, saint.

And the conventional literary historian, trained in the fine art of reducing everything to neat categories, movements, patterns, schools, types, has, by his very method, helped to obliterate the real distinctions which must be observed between a specifically Christian literature and that undogmatic religiosity of feeling and vision so common in current writing.

True, it is no longer easy to isolate the specifically Christian work. No serious writer is able any longer, surely, to work within the limits of a flat naturalism. Even radical social change no longer seems enough to satisfy the artist's thirst for meaning or his craving for security. He has come to seek a metaphysical rather than a merely sociological kind of security. His sense of the mystery of the universe has deepened. So has his sense of the mystery

of selfhood. He is no longer comforted when he says to himself---"I think, therefore I am". He is puzzled. He is anxious. His little umbrella of science no longer protects him against what seems to be the unpremeditated, unpredictable storm of being. This, precisely this, is the human situation as it is revealed in the lightning flash of our moment in time. The Christian writer to-day must be fully aware of just this situation, just this predicament.

It is in terms of final ends that we must draw our distinction between a Christian and a non-Christian art. In his pursuit of the mystery the Christian artist will use every means at his disposal. He is not afraid to look into the subconscious world of desire and myth. He is not disturbed by Frazer's dying corn god, nor is he dismayed by the time-space concept of Einstein. The universe of Einstein will serve him well now as the Ptolemaic universe once served him. The Christian has come to know symbolic knowledge for what it is. And he can use it.

The basic distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian religious artist in our time lies just here. The Christian is able or should be able to use the new symbols provided him by physics, anthropology, psychology. The non-Christian is used by these symbols. And it is just this point of distinction which the literary historian so often misses. For instance, Professor William Tindell, in his recent study Forces in Modern British Literature, has a chapter which he calls "The Hunt for the Father". The Freudian notion that all religion---and religiosity---is nothing else but the sublimated need for symbols of parental authority and protection is made here to apply equally to Eliot, Auden, Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence, Kafka---and even George Bernard Shaw. By this elastic formula, authentic Christianity is equated with various

degrees of jungle myth, the Lamarckian theory of creative evolution, with all forms of idealism, and even, in the case of James Joyce, with a forthright if painful rejection of Christianity.

Now it is true that in all these writers one may detect degrees of religious impulse and feeling. In only two of them---Eliot and Auden---is the specifically Christian note to be found. By different paths Lawrence and Shaw arrive at a kind of nature worship, the adoration of the blood-stream or the life force, as the case may be. Yeats ~~concocts~~ his own myth from many diverse elements. But the mythology of Yeats is an alternative to Christianity---just as William Blake's mythology was an alternative to Christianity, just as Huxley's romantic Hinduism is an alternative to Christianity.

A Christian writer like Eliot, as anxious as any of his contemporaries to break through the naturalistic surfaces to deeper levels of knowledge and experience, can afford, as these others do, to exploit the primitive myth, the content of the dream, the symbols of physics or of theosophy---and yet be able to create an art which is radically different from the art of Yeats, or Lawrence, or Kafka, or Joyce. Why? What distinguishes the symbol-making of the Christian artist from the symbol-making of these others?

Christianity is a dogmatic religion. It demands a certain precision of belief. Christian art bears the stamp of dogma. Not in any obvious way, however, and that the Christian artist is not enslaved, is not driven to any flat conformity seems quite evident when you remember that writers as different from each other as Dante and Chaucer and Milton and Dostoevski and Eliot are Christian writers. The Christian artist has worked in wholly disparate cultural

moments. Because he created the Gothic style he is not therefore a Gothic artist. Later he created the baroque. The fact is that the Christian tradition is the charitable captor of all traditions. It is all things to all men. It cannot, therefore, be defined in terms of its externals. Any definition by externals would miss entirely the fertile and chameleon-like freedom of Christian art.

The central dogma of Christianity is the dogma of the Incarnation. In this dogma, respecting as it does both the divinity of the Word and the humanity of the flesh, is contained the whole principle of the Christian aesthetic. The implications of this are endless. Certainly some of them are these: While the flesh is frail, and while nature itself has suffered the wound of sin, the Incarnation redeems the flesh and the world, laying nature and reason open once more to the supernatural. In other words, the Incarnation creates the sacramental vision of reality. The flesh, the world, things are restored to dignity because they are made valid. Existence becomes a drama which, no matter how painful it still may be, is nevertheless meaningful. No detail in the drama is without its wholly unique reality. No thing is insignificant.

Not only is the dogma of the Incarnation sacramental in its implications for the artist's knowledge of nature. It is also sacramental in its implications for history. As all serious students of the subject have noted, the Christian symbol is inevitably historical. Nothing distinguishes the Christian aesthetic so sharply from the aesthetic of the modern Freudian myth-maker than Christianity's insistence on the historical. The Incarnation occurs in time. It reveals the action of God in history. Pagan myth is never historical but cosmic---a kind of natural revelation. It commemorates the harvest, the alternations of

the seasons, the desires and fears of man naked in the grip of natural forces. The dying corn god who is born again in spring belongs to this order of myth. But for the Christian, the death and Resurrection of Christ is not a cosmic myth. It is an historical event which, however, absorbs sacramentally the cosmic into the historical. Thus Easter absorbs into its structure the re-birth of nature in spring, the ancient Jewish feast of the Passover with all its sense of the role of Providence in history, and the resurrection of Christ which completes history by defining its end. In short, Christianity absorbs the cosmic, the biological, and the psychological myth into the historical symbol. Yet each level of meaning in the new pattern retains its own uniqueness, its own proper truth. For the artist, then, the symbolism of Christianity is an assurance of wholeness.

I have, of course, been describing the essence of Christian art at its height and in its depth. In any approach to the contemporary Christian revival one must be aware simultaneously of the authentic sacramental Christian tradition and of the wounding of that tradition at its very heart by both Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The wound is not easily healed. Nor can the Christian writer any longer proceed as though there had been no wound - or as though nothing since the wound has been valid and in health. Whether he be Catholic or Protestant the contemporary Christian writer is forced to take account of the break in his own tradition and also of the brilliant and vital growth of secular traditions which may seem to be, but intrinsically are not, alien to his own.

Let us admit that with Protestantism there occurred in poetry an abdication of the physical and natural order, a retreat to "the Paradise within" which by the twentieth century was a paradise swarming

with serpents. Its symbol is no longer the tree of knowledge but the psychoanalyst's couch. But surely there were gains, too, in all this. Man's knowledge of himself has deepened. And while it is true that Protestantism delivered nature to the naturalist it is also true that nature was thereby opened to enquiry as it never had been before. On the other hand, Catholicism, forced back on the defensive by the double assault of the Reformation and the new science, while able to conserve sacramental dogma as dogma, was, until recently, unable to insert this dogma persuasively either in the natural order or in the social order. For if Protestantism abandoned sacramentalism in principle it is, I think, fair to say that Catholicism for a long while and to a large extent abandoned it in practice. Sacramentalism is an act---not just an idea about an act. It is an act which seeks to universalize itself. Nor is it properly an act in support of obsolete forms of knowledge or of obsolete forms of political and social organization. One clear piece of evidence for the view that Catholicism did not always act sacramentally at the level of history is the famous papal statement that the tragedy of the 19th century was the loss of the working class to the Church.

If sacramentalism is the life of Christian art---and I think it is---its cultivation in our time must be made strenuous. If Christian art is to be wholly relevant to-day it must not be merely pious. Above all it must not be archaic, yearning nostalgically for the ages of faith. Is there anything more emblematic of retreat and even of defeat than the construction in the 20th century of a Gothic church? (as though to engage in Christian worship one should withdraw into a distant age and shun the skills, the materials, the medium of this time and this place!) For a sacramentalist, surely, a new Gothic church is irrelevant. And it is therefore almost irrelevant.

A fully sacramental Christianity must be able to penetrate again the whole world of knowledge. It must penetrate and reinfuse the historical order ---not as it was, not as it might have been if there had been no Renaissance, no Reformation, no French revolution, no class struggle---but the historical order as it is, as it has actually become.

If secularism has brought about chaos, let us at least admit that this is a magnificent chaos! And if knowledge is indeed to be re-ordered again by Christianity, let us admit that no scrap or particle of knowledge can be ignored or dismissed. For sacramentalism must seek to take into itself its very opposite---it can have no opposite---it can exclude nothing. Even the spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic fruits of the Protestant revolt against the sacramental principle must be sacramentally possessed, or there is no sacramentalism. The whole literature of interior spiritual struggle from Bunyan to Kafka must be re-possessioned. Nothing must be wasted.

The test I would make of the contemporary Christian revival in letters is a simple one. It is this: Assuming that this new Christian literature is dogmatically Christian---which it is---is it fully relevant? If it turns out to be nothing more than pious paper Gothic it is worth very little indeed.

I think the relevance of contemporary Christian literature must be considered not only in terms of the idiom in which the Christian writer addresses us but also in terms of the actual dilemma of modern man. What, using the word in its broadest sense, characterizes modern secular culture? Pre-eminently two things---fragmentation and alienation. Never as now has man known so much about the workings of nature. And yet the very science by which he knows

nature threatens to destroy him. Never as now has man known so much about the workings of the self. But what he has come to know frightens him. Never as now has man known so much about the workings of society. But he is lost in society, overwhelmed by it. The diabolical newspaper headline has for him now the same fatalistic force as the muttering of the witch-doctor once had for the most primitive savage. In short, modern man feels himself to be separate from, alienated from the universe. He feels separate from, alienated from himself. And thus he is, literally, beside himself. The universe, society, the self---these have all become objects of knowledge, alien to each other and alien to the knower. The situation is the very reverse of the sacramental knowledge of reality. It is a situation which has been described before---many times. The point is, how is it to be corrected?

It is precisely to this situation that contemporary Christian art must address itself if it is to be relevant, if it is to be, in the deepest sense, Christian. One must recognize at once that such a situation presents enormous technical and semantic difficulties for the Christian artist. The long process of fragmentation and alienation that has gone on in our culture for over two hundred years has been destructive not only of the sacramental world-view but of the very language in which the Christian sense of reality was expressed. The traditional frame of reference within which the Christian poet once worked has largely vanished. Milton could count on his readers knowing the scriptures. In the 17th century no man of twenty years would guess, as a student of mine recently guessed, that Moses was the husband of the Virgin Mary! And as late as Crashaw and Herbert, Catholic and Anglican poets could count on their readers knowing the shape and the substance of the liturgy of the Church, with all its wealth of image and symbol.

It has been generally observed that one of the difficulties of a poem like T. S. Eliot's Ash Wednesday is this: Eliot here depends for his most significant effects upon an understanding of liturgy and ecclesiasticism not possessed in our day by any save professional churchmen and scholars. The poem may indeed communicate without being understood. Any sensitive reader of poetry, I think, is aware of the intensity and the integrity of this poem. Nevertheless it is paper Gothic, although a very superior kind of paper Gothic. The way of the Christian artist nowadays cannot be this way. A sacramental re-entry into the experience, the knowledge, the sensibility of our time can scarcely be effected by any effort, however, fervent, to restore a Christian idiom appropriate to another and vastly different cultural moment. No one has realized this more sharply than Mr. Eliot himself. In the Four Quartets this kind of difficulty is in large part overcome. As Miss Helen Gardner has pointed out, while the Four Quartets abounds in liturgical images and allusions these are used to deepen and enrich effects already articulated by other means. This is not paper Gothic. The building is modern, functional. And yet it retains, without being at all archaic, cross, candle, incense.

The great achievement of Eliot's Four Quartets is, of course, in the sacramental re-possession of nature and time, things and history. In these poems the sacramental act is consummated through and by means of contemporary sensibility and contemporary knowledge. Mr. Eliot is fully aware, for instance, of the distinction we must now make between clock time and the baffling interior time of the stream of consciousness which cannot be measured at all by the tick of the clock. He is aware, too, of the idea of the continuum, of the sense we now have of reality as a flow, a stream without beginning or end. In these poems the concepts

beginning and end become concepts of value, purpose, destiny rather than merely chronological concepts. And the intuition of eternity is made to possess and to illuminate the personal and the historical levels of the time process. In the Four Quartets, then, Eliot seeks to bring back into a pattern of meaning nature, history, the person. In Dry Salvages, the third of the Four Quartets, you get a fine illustration of the recovery of authentic Christian symbol. The river and sea of this poem are actual river and sea. You could get wet in them, you could drown in them. They exist in their own unique right. Was there ever a keener sense of salt water than here:

The whine in the rigging,
The meance and caress of wave that breaks on water
The distant note in the granite teeth
And the wailing warning from the approaching headland
.....
And under the oppression of the silent fog
The tolling bell...

Yet this is not descriptive nature poetry. This is not Masefield. In Eliot the river is a river. But it rises, through psychological and anthropological allusion to ethical and spiritual levels of meaning for the life of the person, just as Eliot's sea, actual and sensuously known at one level, is also at another level, the symbol of the motion and the intention of history. And beneath its chaotic and complex rhythm beats "the unhurried ground swell, measuring time that is not our time", and touching both exterior nature and interior man with inscrutable but perpetual benediction.

I would say that Eliot as a Christian sacramentalist has, in the Four Quartets, overcome the fragmentation of contemporary culture by reabsorbing the natural or cosmic myth in the historical symbol.

And I would say that he has done so in the terms proper to our moment in time. Nor does the achievement of Eliot stand alone. Auden works in the same direction and not the least important of his contributions to a modern Christian symbolism is the fusion in his best poetry of the Anglican sacramental sense with the distinctly Protestant thought of writers like Kierkegaard and Niebuhr. In varying degrees this recovery of sacramental power, of wholeness, is apparent in the work of Dylan Thomas, Graham Greene, Francois Mauriac.

May I conclude my very general remarks on this problem of Christian symbolism by offering still another generalization? The recovery of the sacramental symbol by contemporary Christian writers is as yet by no means complete. I believe that despite the achievements which I have mentioned, there is some real danger that this promising cultural movement may be dissipated and lost again. I shall try to explain what I fear in terms of Eliot. Is it not the case that while Eliot has taught the necessary analogical relationship between nature, history and man and has therefore helped to heal the rupture between these orders, that he has not at all overcome the disease of alienation? Is it not true that while he is sensitive to the motion of history he does not understand at all the content of history. He knows man---but not men. He does not enter into the concrete, the practical historical situation. Is this why the people of his Cocktail Party are so trivial, so ludicrously unrepresentative? Is this why he makes his lady saint die a sacrificial death at the hands of barbarous natives in some outpost of Empire? Here is nothing, surely, but ecclesiastical Kipling! Here is Christian sacrifice put in a Jungle-book vacuum. How irrelevant this is to the sacrificial demands made on the Christian by the intolerable practicalities of our specific moment in time! The corporate sense, the sense of living

community is absent in Eliot. It is absent in Auden. In Mauriac I would say that there is a feeling for the content of history and no feeling for its motion. Dostoevski was the last major Christian artist to possess fully the sacramental knowledge of man alive in a society that moves. Dostoevski in The Brothers Karamazov realizes symbolically the Christian fact of communion, and he places it in the living core of the historical process.

Without a recovery of this corporate sense, I suspect that Christian art can advance no further because it will have failed to cure the disease of alienation. The artist must do more now than absorb the cosmic myth into the historical symbol. He must insert himself into the historical process. He must stop hunting for the accidental social hierarchies of the lost ages of faith. He will be aware that within history only partial fulfillments of the Christian perspective are possible. But he must also be aware that without such partial fulfillments his art, and history itself, will vanish. This is the challenge for him now.

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